

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 108041
ORIGIN EA-09

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DRAFTED BY EA/K:FMISCH:FLW
APPROVED BY T - MRS. BENSON
EA/K - EHURWITZ

-----131748Z 102541 /41

R 131426Z MAY 77
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY SEOUL

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 108041

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, MASS, KS, US

SUBJECT: KOREAN AMBASSADOR'S CALL ON UNDERSECRETARY FOR
SECURITY ASSISTANCE

1. KOREAN AMBASSADOR KIM YONG-SIK MADE BRIEF COURTESY CALL
ON UNDERSECRETARY BENSON MORNING OF MAY 10. FOLLOWING
INTRODUCTORY EXCHANGE, AMBASSADOR TOLD MRS. BENSON THAT
THE KOREANS APPRECIATE THE DETERRENT ROLE PLAYED BY U.S.
FORCES SINCE THE WAR, AND THAT ALTHOUGH THE ROKG DOES NOT
UNDERSTAND WHY THE U.S. IS WITHDRAWING NOW, EVERY EFFORT
WILL BE MADE TO BUILD UP A DETERRENT FORCE TO REPLACE THE
U.S. PRESENCE. HE SAID THAT THE KOREAN PEOPLE ARE READY
TO PAY THE PRICE FOR AN IMPROVED DEFENSE ESTABLISHMENT,
BUT THAT THE ROK WILL LOOK TO THE U.S. FOR CONTINUED
APPROVAL OF FMS PURCHASES FOR MILITARY HARDWARE AS WELL
AS DEFENSE INDUSTRY SUPPORT.

2. AMBASSADOR KIM SAID THAT THE ROK DOES NOT FEEL
THREATENED BY THE PRC, BUT VIEWS WITH CONCERN INCREASING
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SOVIET PRESENCE IN THE FAR EAST AND IS WORRIED ABOUT
POSSIBLE SOVIET SUPPORT OF NORTH KOREA FOR ANOTHER "PROXY
WAR".

3. MRS. BENSON SAID THAT OVER THE LONG RUN THERE IS NO
QUESTION THAT THE U.S. IS INTERESTED IN HELPING THE ROK,

AND WE ARE NOT ABOUT TO WITHDRAW AND LEAVE THE ROK ALONE AMONG ITS ADVERSARIES. HOWEVER, SHE SAID, THE PRESIDENT IS ANXIOUS TO REDUCE ARMS TRAFFIC THROUGHOUT THE WORLD AND WE ARE GOING TO REDUCE US ARMS SALES ABROAD. SINCE MOST U.S. ARMS EXPORTS GO TO THE MID-EAST, IT FOLLOWS THAT OUR BIGGEST REDUCTIONS WILL BE MADE THERE.

4. IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST FOR ASSURANCE THAT ARMS SUPPLIES TO KOREA WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED, MRS. BENSON SAID SHE COULD NOT SAY THAT OUR OVERALL REDUCTION WOULD NOT AFFECT KOREA, BUT THAT EVERY SALE WOULD BE EXAMINED ON A CASE-BY-CASE BASIS. IN ANY EVENT, NO ONE IN THE U.S. WANTED TO SEE THE ROK BECOME WEAKER.

5. AMBASSADOR KIM CLOSED WITH THE OBSERVATION THAT HISTORICALLY A STABLE KOREA MEANT STABILITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA AND THAT HE SEES 1977 AS A VERY SIGNIFICANT AND BUSY YEAR FOR BOTH OUR COUNTRIES. CHRISTOPHER

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